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GOVERNOR'S OFFICE
Virginia Fire Chiefs Association, Inc. 5: 52

P.O. Box 70907, Richmond, VA 23255-0907

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(804) 762-4438

Fax: (804) 762-9889

Cell: (757) 810-1690

Web Site: www.sfcav.org

The Honorable Mark R. Warner
Governor
Commonwealth of Virginia
Patrick Henry Building, 3rd Floor
111 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Governor Warner:

The Virginia Fire Chief's Association Board of Directors, at its annual retreat on October 18, 2006, passed a resolution regarding safe emergency communications while engaged in a response to a disaster situation. The disaster can either be man-made or the result of natural elements. The recent events involving Hurricane Katrina in the Gulf Coast of the United States have indicated the need for a common communication language when many different agencies are rapidly deployed into a non-traditional response area.

The Virginia Fire Chief's Association requests your support in the elimination of 10-codes for emergency operations. The Secretary of Homeland Security had pushed for this initiative during the nationwide process of insuring that the responsible governmental agencies trained all effected personnel in the National Incident Management System (NIMS). Unfortunately, he has recently reversed his position on the abolishment of the 10-codes for emergency operations. Emergency operations cannot be safely conducted unless all participating parties communicate with a common language. Unfortunately, the 10-codes have different meanings and can cause unnecessary confusion when many divergent groups are responding to a disaster situation.

In addition, in order to continue to provide critical communication infrastructure support, the VFCA strongly endorses the change from a grant-funded position to a permanent status for the Commonwealth's Interoperability Coordinator. Our organization is very concerned that if this does not become a permanent position, the fine work done to date by Chris Essid will be lost and set back public safety operations, especially in light of disaster operations recently conducted as a result of Hurricane Katrina.

Should you need additional information or have questions on the above two resolutions, please feel free to contact me at (757) 897-1884.

Sincerely,

James R. Dishner
President

cc: John Marshall, Secretary of Public Safety